

## 1. DESCRIPTION:

During the last NJ State Monitoring cycle, we looked at our business program offerings and compared the curricular offerings to the demands of the NJ State Department of Education, college admissions directors and corporate executives in human resources, benefits consulting, marketing and communications. We found certain themes. These themes, commitment, actual work experience, advanced presentation and communication skills, a solid knowledge base of business and economic principles and cross-discipline projects were present in and, therefore, potentially easily tied together in our business program. Students being more computer, Internet and financially savvy were also demanding more sophisticated and challenging opportunities to learn about business and economics. We developed the JR MBA Program to pull the course work, creative projects, field trips and work experience into a comprehensive package that brought students together with each other and the business faculty in a network of targeted and sophisticated activities. We were then able to customize the experiences and goals for each student as he or she grew and became more deeply involved in and excited about this program.

The JR MBA Program is a combination of 5 one-semester business electives, a comprehensive portfolio project (business plan), trips to and visits with business executives and the delivery to market of a student-designed and produced global foods, culture and art book. This program is a "major" that also leaves students the time and flexibility to take electives in other areas as well. The interdisciplinary nature of the global foods book, Fabulous Fast Foreign Foods, forces students to connect the work they are doing and have done in other classes and encourages them, as they sub-contract the work to specialists in other courses (Photography, Foods, Art, Commercial Design, TV Media, Creative Writing, Language and World Cultures), to spread that recognition to other students that everything works together. Since this is a "real-time" project, students are working on the production of the product for 3-4 years. When this product is delivered to market, another product is selected and the process begins all over again. Classroom walls become invisible to permit the natural flow of cooperation and collaboration. In the comprehensive portfolio project, students design their own part-time business venture and develop a comprehensive business plan with marketing, accounting, economic, legal and international details. These tasks are accomplished as part of their course work in each of the business courses they take. If students are able to designate an area of special interest, the internship and comprehensive portfolio project can be adapted to suit those needs. In addition, students may act as consultants or mentors to younger students in the program. And all graduating students are encouraged to act as resources through e-mail contact from college/work to students currently in the program.

Students meet as a group biweekly during their lunch break with the coordinator to discuss progress, challenges, current business issues, meet with visitors. We also take trips together as a group to the Mercantile and Stock exchanges, lectures at nearby universities, Continental Airlines, Atlanta Corporation and other relevant sites.

There are absolutely no new resources necessary. Any school with a business department, access to the Internet and a school-to-career program has everything necessary. The tying together of all these activities in a meaningful package customized for each student is what this program is all about. Schools may begin by adopting portions of the program and/or begin with ninth grade students.

## OBJECTIVES:

Having committed to the program as 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> graders, students are expected to spend 3 or 4 years amassing a variety of business experiences, so that upon graduation they will have had numerous opportunities to develop a sense of business ethics, practice workplace skills, and gain confidence in their ability to take on a multi-year, multi-dimensional project with other students and see it to its successful conclusion.

The JR MBA Program is also designed to promote effective teamwork, collaborative learning, project management skills, presentation skills, economic awareness, commitment to a long-term project, social

business skills, sensitivity to the laws and cultures of overseas business partners, and, of course, research skills.

## **2. EDUCATION NEEDS and CROSS CONTENT WORKPLACE READINESS STANDARDS**

Students were isolated in their classrooms and in the subjects they were studying in those classrooms. Projects and assignments were traditionally assigned in “school” time rather than “real” time. Students rarely had to synthesize concepts and experiences from various disciplines. Their assessments were traditionally in a “school” format or, as some might say, “educentric”, rather than in formats that could be published, bought or used by the community outside the school. To an overwhelming degree, their education was delivered by teachers from textbooks. In this program, students are responsible for keeping a log of their work experiences with mentors, updating their resumes, making professional presentations of their business plans to business people and college students and then revising those plans based on the feedback, interviewing and hosting meetings with guest speakers, attending local Chamber of Commerce meetings, maintaining an individual stock portfolio, reading current business and economic periodicals, using real and current business and government statistics in their projects.

### **CROSS CONTENT WORKPLACE READINESS STANDARDS**

The following cross-content workplace readiness standard/indicators are addressed: Standard 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, as evidenced by the following student activities: Project management, resume writing, dress rehearsals for interviews, discussion of the ethical ramifications of business and marketing decisions made, successful completion of an internship at one or more work sites.

The following cross-content workplace readiness standard/indicators are addressed: Standard 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, as evidenced by the following student activities: Heavy use of the Internet for research and resource contact, maintenance of an electronic portfolio of experiences, preparation of Power Point presentations for business plan, preparation of spreadsheets for accounting and reporting.

The following cross-content workplace readiness standard/indicators are addressed: Standard 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, as evidenced by the following student activities: Developing an original business plan; researching competition, local and regional economic factors, international political and economic climate; interpreting and analyzing these data; trouble shooting and finding solutions to unexpected problems encountered in bringing the global foods book to market; applying decision-making models during group problem-solving sessions; presenting a rationale for decisions and choices to group members and supervisors.

The following cross-content workplace readiness standard/indicators are addressed: Standard 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, as evidenced by the following student activities: Managing individual portfolios and logs; revising business plan based on results of “challenge session”; participating in “challenge sessions” for colleagues; setting and following time lines both short and long term; considering and incorporating cultural and ethnic differences in the international marketing plan.

The following cross-content workplace readiness standard/indicators have been addressed: Standard 5:5, 6, 8, as evidenced by the following student activities: Addressing safety concerns and compliance with laws in their business plans; anticipating safety or safe-use concerns in connection with the use of the product or service.

## **3. ASSESSMENT MEASURES**

The following assessment measures are used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the JR MBA Program are being met:

- ❑ Oral presentation accompanied by Power Point slides of intermediate and final business plan project which meets the requirements for accuracy, evidence of research, use of special features, quality of oral presentation and answering of questions.
- ❑ Resumes updated at the end of every school year in work-place ready form

- ❑ Successful completion of job interviews as reported by business interviewers
- ❑ Successful completion of an internship by meeting the employer's criteria as well as the program's for on-the-job projects
- ❑ Students must maintain on-line contact for one school year with a business or professional person or undergraduate student around the completion of a project.
- ❑ The global foods, culture book must be delivered to market at the appointed time
- ❑ Students must keep a personal portfolio of their individual business plan ready for inspection at all times
- ❑ All team and group work and sub-contracted work must be completed in a timely and acceptable fashion according to pre-determined criteria.